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(Independent Living)  
for the Accountable Aging Care Management September 2011 Newsletter

**1. When is the ideal time to move from living in one's own home to living in a Retirement Community?**

- When depression or loneliness are interfering with living a day to day normal life.
- When a crisis has occurred such as a fall or an illness and fear of being alone is a result.
- When the doctor is saying living alone is not a good option for multiple reasons.
- When fixing meals and housekeeping and yard work become difficult to manage.
- When vision or physical problems make driving unsafe.
- When someone loves to have fun and be social—when they can participate in all the activities. Don't wait too late for this!
- When your family member can make their own decision and be a participant in a move.
- When a move can be seen as a new exciting adventure, not as a dreaded forced move.

**2. In making the choice to move to a facility, what are the three most important factors that a family should consider?**

- Does the “personality” of the community “fit” with my family member? The best way to judge this is to eat a meal (test the food in the process!) and observe the surroundings. Do the residents who are eating look happy and are they interacting with one another? Listen for a “happy buzz”! Inquire about the longevity of the staff and relate that to what is seen in the dining room—is there a sense of respect and family atmosphere of caring between staff and the residents?
- Is the organization time-tested and financially stable? Are resources allocated to assure a well maintained and updated facility?
- Is there a continuum with different levels of care for different needs as they arise? If a couple needs different levels of care in the future, ask what can be done to accommodate their needs? How much will that cost?

**3. Once a person moves into a facility, what are some of the ways a family can help make this transition easier?**

- Let the new resident of the community help decide where to put things in the apartment—even if sitting in a chair in the center of all the boxes. Too often I have heard “my kids unpacked everything and I have no idea where anything is.” It is an extreme time of turmoil as is, but this can help!
- If the community has a Welcome Wagon type program where current residents help a new resident get acclimated, then step back and let it work! Let your family member “fly” on their own. If there is no such program, then go with them to a few meals and activities until a few new friends are established.

- Make the move fun! Bring the time treasured items, but suggest getting something new. Go shopping together and Enjoy!

**4. In working with families that have waited too long, what do you see as the primary causes?**

- Fear of even broaching the subject and anticipating resistance.
- Not knowing the financial circumstance of their family member—how much monthly income, savings and investments they have—and being afraid to ask.
- Fear of being the “bad guy” to siblings or the family member who would benefit from the move—not wanting to be seen as the one “forcing them to move”
- Denial of the situation on both sides—a couple may be compensating for each other and as a whole they seem to be doing ok, but one may be carrying too heavy of a load and the adult child/person helping does not see the true picture. To help with denial of the actual person who would benefit from a move to a retirement community, it is helpful to sit down and make a Pro and Con list and a Cost Comparison of what it costs to live in their own home versus the community...nowadays with conference call/speaker phones and Skype—even long distance family members can come together and help with the lists.
- Fear of the unknown...most communities offer a trial stay for a night or two...go with the person if possible and have a pajama party! Make it a fun trial and just check it out and overcome that obstacle.
- The biggest of all is the fear of Change--- something we battle all of our lives. I have heard so many times over the years, after once settled and breathing a sigh of relief...”Why didn’t I do this sooner?”

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